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MR VERA S

Independent

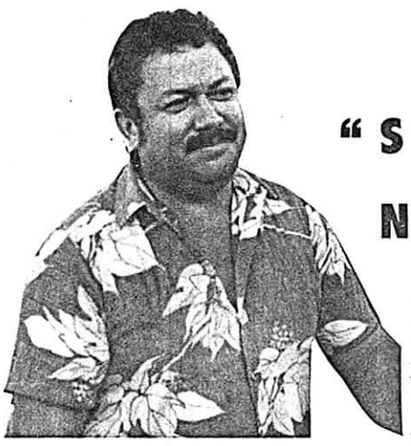
JOURNAL

NO. 29 February 9 1988 Atiu-Cook Islands

ECONOMICS

NON, MONSIEUR WE'RE OUT!

-SENSATIONAL VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE IN MULTI MILLION DOLLAR VANILLA SCHEME



Hon. Norman George M.P.

"SUPERB LEADERSHIP BY NORMAN GEORGE"

...such was the comment of a leading Atiu Vanilla Corporation Landowner upon last week's performance by Areora MP and CIs. Foreign Minister Norman George. The Minister was stepping into a situation which had been nearing boiling point.

INSIDE

POLITICS

CIP LINE UP

ELECTION 89 ✓

After weeks of rumour and counter rumour, Atiu's Cook Islands Party officials finally get down to naming election candidates. ABOVE: Tura Koronui (CIP candidate for Areora)

ATIU NUI

SPECIAL REPORT

Unbelievable remarkable, astonishing... ..all the superlatives came out last week for Atiu's NZSC students who topped the nation in the 1987 examinations.

MR VERA'S Independent JOURNAL

a national

P.O. ATIU C.IS.

Cook Islands

The JOURNAL offers a weekly review of news, commentary and features at home and abroad from a Cook Islands and Pacific Regional standpoint.

The JOURNAL is allied to no exisiting political party or faction. Advertising rates are obtainable from the Editor P.O. ATIU.

Submissions of articles or other editorial material and letters is invited addressed to the editor. Freelance rates by negotiation.

Published and printed by TERAI MANEA (sole proprietor Terupe Patiare Kelly).

EDITOR: David Lewis.

publication.

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Our last week's issue was delayed for unusual reasons. We believe that these were justified.

If we have any single guide-line for news, it is the broad understanding that we will apply, to the best of our ability, the ethics of journalism...good journalism. The heart of these is defined in the CIBNC Act in which important mention of reportage in "the public interest" is noted.

We believe in self-disciplined press reporting not censorship. Hence two stories we were covering last week we subjected to this self-discipline. The main story was, we felt, most certainly in "the public interest" and we held it back to allow time for consideration.

The story concerns the Atiu Vanilla Project which we have been covering for six months and appears to be heading towards a climax. This week, in the second of our in-depth articles on national crises, we report on the Project as a crucial example of modern Cook Islands land problems. We hope you enjoy it, in spite of a week's delay in "the public interest."

Editorial

THE NORMAN CONQUEST

The controversial Minister of Foreign Affairs attracts enemies like mozzies round a 60 watter.

They buzz and whine ferociously. But they can't bite. They make no impression. And they are entirely dependent upon the bright object to which they are ceaselessly attracted.

On many levels, the New Year has been a great time of personal triumph for Minister George.

His personal star shines brighter than ever on Atiu. His leadership during the recent Vanilla Crisis was unanimously judged by landowners to have been a model of its kind...informed, democratic, impartial, and unquestionably in the people's interests.

Mr. Koronui of the CIP is said to be confident of his vote count.

Mr. Koronui is kidding!

On a whole series of political fronts (employment, development, health, education, works, and family income levels) Mr. George knows that when election time comes few voters in Areora, Te Ngatangi and Ngatiarua, will be willing to shift votes away from a proven record to an unknown candidate with only one issue to debate.

That issue appears to be Norman George. It is not the issue which needs to be debated. It is also an issue which will be won hands down by Mr. George.

ECONOMICS

SCENE: A Pacific Island...
..the airstrip...or
maybe the beach.

TIME: Any time over the
last 150 years.

COVER STORY

VANILLA

(Curtain rises upon assembled native hordes husking coconuts, singing, dancing, happily smiling, munching corned beef and picking kutu off each other)

ENTER: Paramount Chief MP from big place cross de sea in brand new safari suit bought with latest per diem.....accompanied by Rich Foreign Entrepreneur/Missionary/ Socio-Anthropolist/Bomb Tester

HORDES: (singing) Hail to thee o Paramount Chief
Welcome to our humble reef
Greetings also Foreign Man
All hail the next Development Plan.

PARAMOUNT CHIEF:

Greetings humble native folk
With me is this foreign bloke
He says he's had this sudden dream
About a money making scheme.....

ET CETERA....

M. Charles Lehartel
(Tahitian Entrepreneur)

NO, BUT SERIOUSLY—

THE PEOPLE STRIKE BACK

The meeting of the Atiu Vanilla Corporation held in the CAO's residence last week was dramatically different.

An outside observer would not have noticed.

Meetings of the landowners involved in the now notorious "vanilla" project have been held on and off since 1983.

(A review of the whole project is offered on later pages).

These meetings have involved Government, Atiuan leaders, foreign experts and a foreign development company called "Ledarco".

They have also supposed to have involved the mamas and small time planter papas who own the land required by the CIs government in order to fulfil their obligations to Ledarco under a Head of Agreement undertaking signed in 1983.

What was different about last week's meeting was that, for the first time, the little people landowners were able to understand precisely what they were handing over the foreign entrepreneur.

What they found out shocked them.

Two families were shocked enough to remove immediately their blocks of land from the Vanilla Incorporation.

People

The fact that the people were given their chance is due to Areora/Te Ngatangi/Ngatiarua MP and National Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norman George.

For a first term MP, Minister George has been involved in an enormous

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-SENSATIONAL VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE

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n.ber of epic moments in the history of the young Cook Islands nation.

Far, however, from the glamorous international Foreign Affairs circuit, Norman George gave undisputed evidence last week that he cares for the people who put him where he is-the ordinary families of Atiu.

Said Ada Nicholls, Rongomatane Ariki and trustee for at least a third of the land of Atiu, "Norman did a brilliant job in helping the people understand their position and their right."

Added Junior Vainerere, son of the venerated ex-MP for Atiu Vainerere Tangatapoto, "the Minister's performance was magnificent. A superb example of leadership."

Another "mama", head of a landowning family deeply involved in the Vanilla Project summed up, "I don't understand much about the law. That's why we want our children educated to help us understand and come back to give us advice we trust. I think Norman has done that for us."

LEASE

Minister George's participation in the landowners' deliberations came after a week of rising discontent.

At issue was the lease offered to the Vanilla Corporation by the Ledarco Company headed by Tahitian entrepreneur Charles Lehartel.

Several families involved in the 10 block incorporation had begun to have strong reservations about many of the terms of the lease.

Mounting anger had been witnessed during the week following a meeting between landowners, Ledarco and Teenui/Mapumai MP Mariri Parataingа.

Much of the anger was expressed towards Mr. Parataingа and other Atiuan local leaders who, it was alleged, had urged landowners to sign a lease which they did not understand.

LEGAL

Focal point of anger on the part of some and bewilderment from others was an alleged public statement by Mr. Parataingа to the effect that the lease had been seen and approved by former Incorporation lawyer Vincent Ingram.

Evidence obtained by the JOURNAL in 1987 from Mr. Ingram appeared to cast doubts upon this statement.

The JOURNAL has now contacted Mr. Ingram through NZ QC Mr. Paul Temm to ascertain whether Mr. Parataingа's crucial statement was true.

Considerable praise was accorded Ledarco representative lawyer Tim Arnold of Clarke's who initially alerted landowners that they needed to have legal advice before signing a lease.

"The judge will not accept a lease unless he is satisfied you have been properly represented," Mr. Arnold told landowners.

Commented an angry landowner, "here we have our own MP and committee chairman encouraging us to sign a lease which the "opposition" lawyer advises against!"

It has been reported to the JOURNAL that Mr. Parataingа and two other members of a "committee" now proven defunct had been ready to sign within minutes of the opening discussions!

In the week following, it was decided by one family to call in either Mr. Ingram or Mr. George immediately.

Although sitting on the "hottest" story of its brief media life, the JOURNAL went out of print considering that at this stage the "public interest" was best served by alerting Mr. George as to the state of local feeling.

This was done in a full report, the only copy of which was handed to Mr. George in his official capacity as adviser to the landowners.

During the ensuing week, Mr. George went through the lease, referring sections of it to the Crown Law Office.

He brought his findings back to Atiu.

A meeting of landowners was held at which Mr. George acted as adviser.

"I am not here to tell you what to do," he said.

"I am here to help you understand the law, answer your questions, make sure

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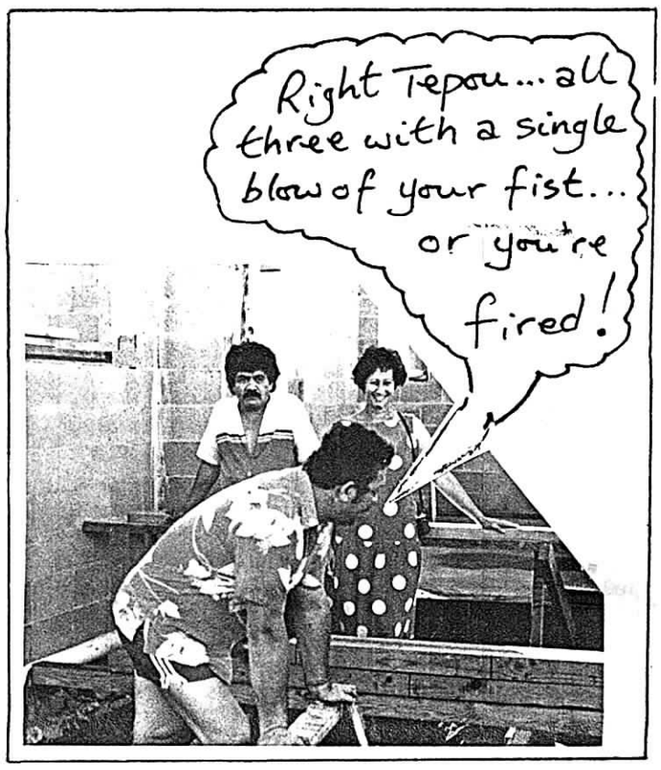
CAMPAIGNING GETS UNDER WAY



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" SUPERB LEADERSHIP BY NORMAN GEORGE "

you know what you are letting yourself in for and satisfy myself that you know your legal rights," he added.

"The meeting which ensued," said a former committee member, was "the best and fairest I have ever attended".

Praise for the Minister afterwards was high.

One comment seemed to sum up the feelings of all present.

"That's what I call working for the people."

The meeting ended with the unanimous decision of two families to withdraw their land from the incorporation, including the members of the family owning the Areii 53 block upon which an experimental vanilla project has been set up.

Asked whether the owners would be liable for compensation, a landowner told the JOURNAL, "no one gave Ledarco, Mariri or the Island Council permission to plant on our land. They were told to get off last year."

The remaining families re-elected a committee to handle future affairs and dramatically altered the terms of any future lease.

After it was pointed out by some observers that it was unlikely that Ledarco would accept the new terms, a spokesman stated, "we'll see. Now the negotiations will be done properly. Norman has shown he is to be trusted and we shall have our lawyers."

Vincent Ingram MP (Landowners' legal representative)

SO WHAT WENT WRONG ? A HISTORY

The first moves in the project were made in November 1982.

At this time Mr. Eric Garnier of Tahiti (sometimes referred to over the last few years as the "Cook Islands Consul" in Tahiti) made contact on behalf of M. Lehartel with Tangata Simiona, MP for Atiu and then Minister of Agriculture.

On 27 December 1982 Garnier and M. Lehartel held a week's discussion with the CIs. Government and presented a financial feasibility study.

A project document and agreement of intent was signed between the CIs. Government and Ledarco Inc.

In January 1983, Mr. Tutaka of TLT held discussions in Tahiti and confirmed the CIs. Government's interest.

Exchanges of information between the parties continued from January to March 1983.

M. Lehartel visited CIs. again in March 1983.

Following the change of government, M. Lehartel sought confirmation that the new government supported the project. This assurance was given by the CIP government, in May 1983 by Mr. G. Ellis.

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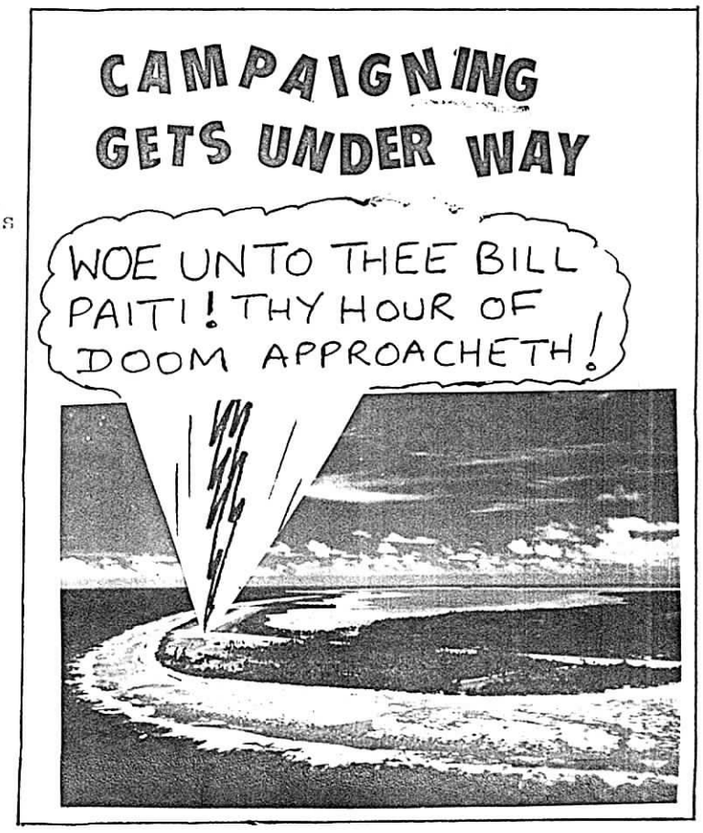

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Mr. Garnier than returned to select a site. Atiu was chosen.

M. Lehartel met with the PM, Mr. Henry to continue negotiations leading to an exclusivity contract up to 40 years for the rights of sale of vanilla from the Cook Islands.

In June-July 1983 Tahitian representatives prepared the project documents.

Support for the project commencement was given in the Speech from the throne.

The final project document was received by government in late July.

On 2 August, the PM gave official approval in principle to proceed.

On 23 August 1983, Mr. Ellis requested approval (under the terms of the then caretaker government) from Head of State Gavin Donne for the project to be considered "on-going" between a US investment company, Avilion Ltd and the government.

Sir Gavin Donne
Head of State
during the 1983
Caretaker Government

Mr. Ellis claimed bi-party support for the project and Sir Gavin expressed "no hesitation" in supporting the project.

On the 7th September 1983 a Heads of Agreement was signed between Charles Lehartel and the CIs. Government based upon a proposal called the "Cook Islands Vanilla Project".

Geoffrey Henry
PM during 1983

Article 1 charges M. Lehartel with the task of forming a company involving himself, his nominees and "certain land-owners" on Atiu.

Articles 3,4,5 concern the growing and sale of vanilla. (and ONLY vanilla ED)

Article 8 charges the government with the task of securing an incorporation of Atiu land within 150 days.

Article 10 gives EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS to M. Lehartel's company to plant and grow vanilla in the Cook Islands for 15 years...

AND EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS to market and export vanilla for up to 35 years.

On 9 January 1984 the Deputy PM, Dr. Robati re-affirmed government's support "in any way at all".

On the 5th-11th January 1984, a delegation led by Tangata Simiona went to Atiu to explain matters to the Atiu landowners....

(NOTE: AFTER the government had already on its own signed to ensure the incorporation of land on Atiu! ED)

Up to March 1984, Incorporation discussions with landowners were handled by Mr. Norman George

In February 1984, Clarke's (for M. Lehartel) outlined a seven million dollar development programme for Atiu ($US7m.) within the first two years of operations.

In March the incorporation was carried out by Short & Tylor.

In March Clarke's (then Clarke Ingram) sent a letter to Short & Tylor alleging that agreement between the parties will involve a COMMITTMENT to a lease NOT and option. The letter also states that the lease would terminate if finance is not obtained.

An incorporation document covering 10 blocks (est. 740 acres) was issued by the High Court on 22 March 1984.

Difficulties in finalising a lease were experienced up to June 1984.

According to landowners, nothing of note then occurred until 1985.

No lease had been signed.

A committee of management under the chairmanship of Mr. Parataiinga and with Mr. Ingram as its lawyer was in operation with a stautory life of two years from March 22 1984.

It did not hold nor has ever held, it appears, an AGM or submitted statements.

In late 1985, the Tahitian Minister of Agriculture M. G. Kelly heard that "the people of Atiu wished to grow vanilla". As a member of an Atiuan family, he has told the JOURNAL that it was on this understanding that he visited Atiu and offered material and help and advice from the Tahitian Ministry.

This help materialised during 1986 and 1987. (NOTE: When he heard that the project was not to grow vanilla but to lease land, he withdrew help -JOURNAL interview 1987 ED)

Dramatic action began in early 1987 when Mr. Parataiinga (now an MP) arrived on Atiu and sent workmen and machinery on to the Areii 53 block to start what was rumoured to be an experimental project.

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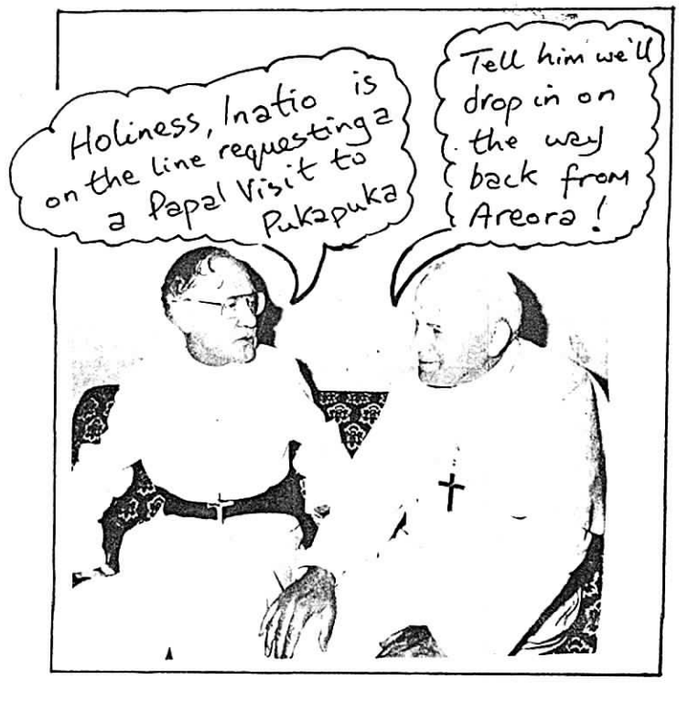

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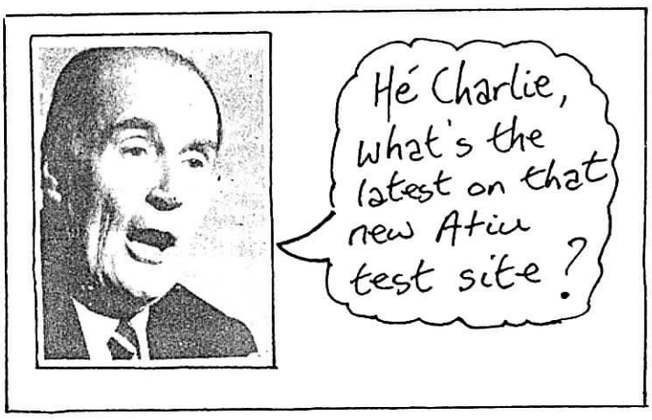
On several visits thereafter, M. Lehartel accompanied by Mr. Parataínga and the Island Council inspected the land and the project. M. Lehartel employed workmen there.

Contact was made by the family involved with Mrs. Tina Browne (represnting M. Lehartel) in order to set up a meeting with M. Lehartel to find out what he was doing on their land.



M. Lehartel and Mr. Parataínga refused to attend the meeting according to eye-witness reports.

OUT!

Relations between the parties and the Areii block family grew more acrimonious, particularly with Mr. Parataínga who refused an interview with the JOURNAL on the subject.

1987 was punctuated by a series of abrupt arrivals by Mr. Parataínga and M. Lehartel on flying visits.

The year ended with a sudden visit by Mr. Parataínga and two Atiuans to Tahiti at M. Lehartel's expense.

Finally, a lease document was handed to landowners by M. Lehartel and Mr. Parataínga. Several landowners complained of pressure made upon them to "get it signed" and allegations were widespread that the lease was not the one they had originally been considering.

Concern was expressed that M. Lehartel has asked for the handwritten insertion of a "new partner".

This was (reluctantly) revealed to the JOURNAL by Mr. Parataínga as "an American from the States" ..."call him our banker".

In early January 1987, a further abrupt visit by M. Lehartel and M. Parataínga asked landowners to recognise urgency in signing the lease and gave a date, according to committe members, of 16 February when the lease was required to be signed.

Following a specially convened meeting of the Areii block family, no signatures were given and the lease was returned. Concensus among landowners was that all matters should be referred to Mr. George for his and Crown Law's advice.

WHERE DID IT ALL GO WRONG?

The JOURNAL has been covering the Vanilla story for over six months.

During this time, it has come under severe pressure and threat.

At least two Atiu island leaders have asked Mr. George to have us closed down.

Church leaders have publicly attacked us and staff members have been "threatened".

Throughout all this, we have continued to pursue this and other stories involving conservative island forces.

At no time has the Minister offered less than 100% encouragement.

The JOURNAL has considered this story to be deeply in the public interest. It is the biggest ever Outer Islands project and it is the most important land case in modern Outer Islands history.

For this reason, we have taken several stances.

Long time readers of the JOURNAL are aware of each of them.

*We have at all times clearly identified any vested interest on the part of the staff or owner of the JOURNAL.

*We have exercised discretion as to what is immediately publishable and what, given Atiu's state of media awareness, should be first referred to outside authorities.

*Where the public interest is best served, we have used our media sources both in the Cook Is. and Tahiti to provide information to authorities rather than immediately publish.

The JOURNAL is most sensitive to stories involving developmental projects at all times.

In the case of the Vanilla project, we are especially sensitive in view of the enormous sums apparently involved and the prominence of all the many personalities who have been engaged in aspects of the project.

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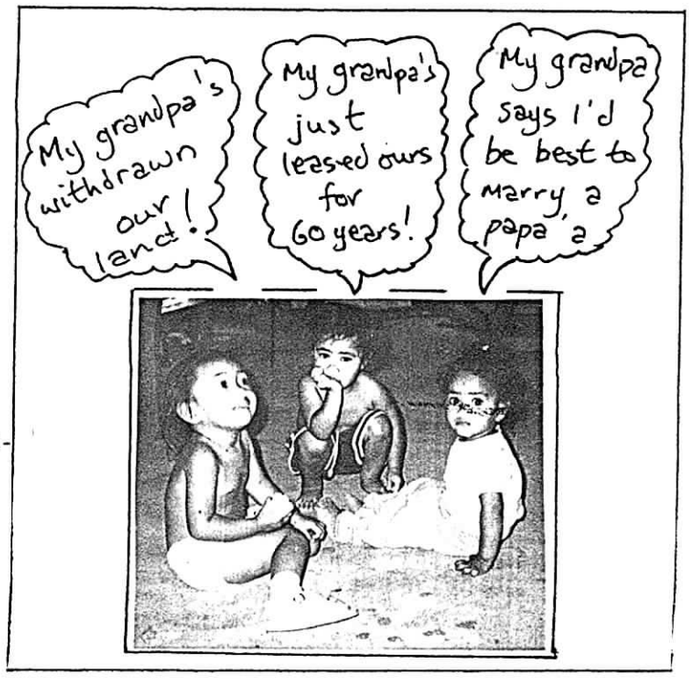

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We are also aware that the careers of the two Atiu members can be seriously affected by the outcome.

Finally, and above all, we are aware that affairs involving uneducated and unsophisticated subsistence farmers and their land and future benefits are matters requiring extreme delicacy and care.

VANILLA

So, in the light of all this, we offer readers the following assessment of what went wrong... or, rather (as it is by no means over) what has gone wrong so far.

The lessons are, we feel very important at a time in the history of the Cook Islands when landowners are in danger of being party to land deals which will result in their being, to all intents and purposes, dispossessed of their land rights.

We discuss the affair under what we consider to be subheadings that may disentangle a 5½ year negotiation.

The personalities involved read like a Who's Who of Polynesian Affairs in the 1980's....

Sir Gavin Donne, former CIs. Head of State.

Three CIs. PM's, Sir Thomas Davis, Dr. Pupuke Robati and Mr. Geoffrey Henry.

Cabinet members George Ellis, Tangata Simiona, Norman George and Terepai Maoate.

All the top CIs. legal firms and lawyers.

Tahitian Vice President Georges Kelly.

Numerous public servants and businessmen from Tahiti and the Cook Islands.

The Atiu Island Council and MP Mariri Parataiinga.

Plus...10 Atiuan family groups.

A. THE INITIAL CONTRADICTION:

This is probably the most important thing that has gone wrong. From it stems the massive misunderstandings, acrimony and confusions which have characterised the conduct of the affair.

It is abundantly clear that the Atiu landowners from the very outset have been irrelevant except as occupiers of land which the CIs. government and Ledarco require.

*All initial negotiations up to signing of letters of intent were conducted between the government and Ledarco...NOT the Atiu landowners.

*Incorporation was discussed with the Atiu landowners AFTER government had already committed themselves to organising the incorporation of land on Atiu.

*Atiu was one of several possible sites selected by Ledarco. It was not a question of Atiu landowners seeking development for their land "a priori". They agreed to suggestions by Tangata Simiona and M. Lehartel. From the outset, they were never in the "gun seat".

*All correspondence involving any of three governments and Gavin Donne's caretaker government is based upon the premiss that the Atiu landowners are a tool of government, a sort of government "asset" in negotiations with Lehartel.

In George Ellis summary of events from 1982 throughout 1983, they are not mentioned as having any role to play.

HENCE, throughout five years of negotiations, the essential contradiction remained....

1. Government and Ledarco were operating on the understanding that Atiu land could be set up by government (under a government organised incorporation) as a basis for negotiation.

2. Lehartel was operating on the understanding that government could do this on the basis of undertakings by local politicians and that, therefore, all he had to do was keep in touch with the politicians. He also may have believed that uneducated, Maori-speaking subsistence farmers on Atiu knew the legal niceities of English language international law.

3. Atiu landowners believed they were moving into a real and viable incorporation set-up when in fact all they were required to do was to form a paper incorporation, lease away the land in its name and retire from the scene.

An organisational structure with this massive contradiction at its heart then rolled on towards 1987, the year in which the landowners suddenly began to discover and question their own irrelevance.

Once this happened, enormous confusion set in. Up to this time, there had been no real heroes or villains. Just contradiction. According to which "side" you were supposed to be on, heroes and villains quickly emerged.

B. THE CONFUSIONS:

It was resolutely denied by Mr. Parataiinga and the Ledarco lawyer that there was any confusion.

Local Atiuan leaders joined in.

Any who expressed or reported upon confusion were publicly and privately branded as "troublemakers".

If they were white, they were branded as "papa'a" troublemakers.

In the aftermath of the Enua Manu Land Corporation liquidation (after which the High Court judge was similarly

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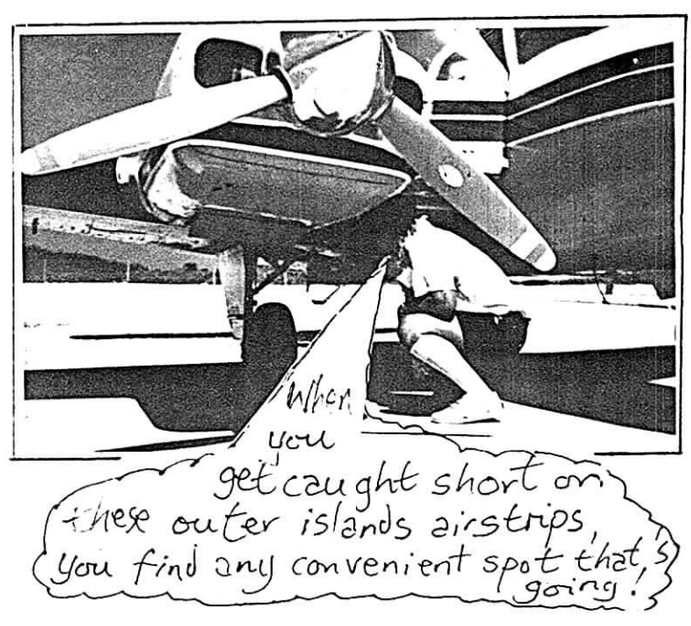

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dismissed by some leaders as offering mere "papa'a" law) an all-inclusive command was issued in the same of the church and Island Council to "not listen to papa'as"!

Today, it is admitted by all, including the Ledarco lawyers that massive confusion exists and has existed since 1984.

*The people had no understanding of the terms of the lease. When it was explained to them this year, many were aghast at what they had been urged to sign.

*The committee did not know that it had legally ceased to function and had no right to operate.

*The incorporation itself may or may not legally exist.

*Landowners did not realise what, in fact, a "lease" was in terms of their land rights.

*The extent of the land under incorporation was not understood.

Given these confusions derived from the initial contradictions, one can now detect several errors and make some judgments accordingly:

THE JUDGEMENTS:

*The major blame seems now to be levelled by landowners at Mr. Paratainga and Mr. Lehartel and or his lawyers.

Mr. Paratainga frequently stated last year that he wanted things done "the Atiu Way", even "without all these lawyers". Such an attitude may be judged outrageously naive. The "Atiu Way" is clearly not the way to handle multi-million dollar international contracts.

Mr. Paratainga's naivety may or may not be acceptable. What appears totally unacceptable was the use it was put to on Atiu by "leaders" to blackguard and abuse protestors.

Legitimate land grievances were dismissed as "trouble-making" and "playing politics" sometimes by the very people who were roundly castigated in September by Judge Dillon for treating their ELI shareholders "like dirty rags to be wiped off".

M. Lehartel and his legal advisers have taken a strictly constructionist view of proceedings. resting on the letter of the law and relying upon the landowners to be properly and legally represented.

We believe it fair comment to suggest that it is difficult to understand how M. Lehartel could have been persuaded that the landowners were properly represented.

All landowners are aware that the help and advice of value in 1987 and 1988 they received came initially from the "opposition" lawyers, Mrs. Browne and Mr. Arnold!

*Two major erros can be now claimed to be virtually factual:

a. Mr. Paratainga was extremely misguided to continue his role as chairman of the Management Committee when he became a Member of the ruling Government. Government's committment to this project is NOT and never has been to the Atiu landowners. Their committment is to the contractual arrangements they made with M. Lehartel BEFORE any incorporation was formed. As Dr. Robati noted (TO M. LEHARTEL!) "We are ready to assist you in any way at all to assure the successful start of the project as soon as possible." (9.1.84)

Mr. Paratainga should have been advised immediately that he could not fairly represent a THIRD party (the Atiu landowners) as a committed servant of a SECOND party (government) and increasingly of late a close companion of the FIRST party (Mr. Lehartel).

b. The second error appears now to be clearly the refusal of Mr. Lehartel and Mr. Paratainga to meet in June 1987 with the owners of the Areii Block for a meeting set up by them and Mrs Browne to work out a fair and friendly solution ("Atiu Way"!) to the confusions.

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Open to all
AML

AFTER WORK
WEEK-ENDS
TONIGHT
WELCOME

ENTLEPLEN
ER

You likee? I call it the Shanghai Store and I'm practising for the Grand Opening of my Hong Kong Restaurant!
Signed Joe
(Head of Black Dragon Vakatini Tong)

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"A more serious error all together and one which may doom the project totally was the alleged re-drawing of the lease. Landowners may be hearing from Mr. Ingram as to whether this was the lease he helped draw up (as claimed by Mr Parataínga) or whether it is a new lease completely. In view of the urgency expressed to landowners to have this signed and in view of the very significant thrust within it to ensure that M. Lehartel can drop Vanilla when he chooses and move into virtually any enterprise he chooses with anyone he chooses (subject only to the Monetary Board) the answer to this question is widely considered to contain grave political implications for Mr. Parataínga.

All the above, however really relate to recent events. If called upon to offer a deeper judgment, the JOURNAL would again return to our initial thesis that there are no heroes or villains, no errors which cannot be traced back to the original structure of CIs. government relations with Outer Islands.

As Dr. Robati noted, the CIs. Government were "ready to help" M. Lehartel in "any way at all."

A cynic might add, "including, if necessary riding rough shod over any local landowner who stands in the way."

Such cynicism might be understandable but would not be strictly true.

For a start, the Atiu landowners have never had a primary role in an affair which is basically a Government-Lehartel negotiation.

When they finally worked out that all they were required to do was round up some land and sign it over lock, stock and barrel to Lehartel for 35 years, it was almost too late for them to prevent a disaster.

But, in the structure of Central Government/Outer Islands affairs, the Outer Islands people have never had much of a say.

All their rights have been officially self-delegated by their politician/chief representatives on Rarotonga (who have always done pretty well out of the arrangement).

This may have been just acceptable in the days of Papa Vainerere prior to modern investment contracts. It is demonstrably not suitable today.

It is a tradition which suits the Raro-based politician/chief, the entrepreneur and the aid agency. It turns the "little people" into victims.

As Judge Dillon pointed out, today's "little people" shareholders have a duty to protect themselves lest they be betrayed by leaders who would "wipe them off like a dirty rag."

The structure of Government/Outer Islands relations is apparent through the vanilla correspondence.

7 Governments led by figures as distinguished as Gavin Donne have worked on the premiss that Outer Islands land can be jacked up and rubber-stamped for schemes approved by Central Government with the landowners at best having little understanding of what is going on or at worst being duped!

SUMMARY:

Starting from the assumption that Outer Islands land can be spoken for by Raro-based politicians, Government entered into a series of negotiations with M. Lehartel by means of a structure which was shot through with contradictions. To dispose rapidly with those contradictions, landowners were not properly briefed. Thus several serious errors of judgment were made. These might have been disastrous for some landowners had not Mr. George, Mr. Arnold and the Crown Law lawyers intervened to bring the landowners face to face with what they were being asked to sign away.

Comment

We have featured the history of the "Vanilla Project" in depth for obvious reasons.

Land rights are the most contentious issues in contemporary Cook Islands life and politics.

The land rights issues are inevitably closely bound up with the parrallel issue of foreign investment and foreign ownership.

The attitude and performance of a Cook Islands government deeply committed to development through foreign investment is also a matter of deep analysis by the public.

And, finally, the performance of MP's, frequently under attack for ignoring their "little people" in the glamour and dazzle of political high life, is similarly a matter of great public concern.

All elements are present in the as yet unfinished saga of the "Vanilla Project".

It is difficult to avoid the impression that the "little people" have been abused on all sides.

By successive governments, leaders, entrepreneurs and even Atiuan local officials appear to have treated the small-time Maori-

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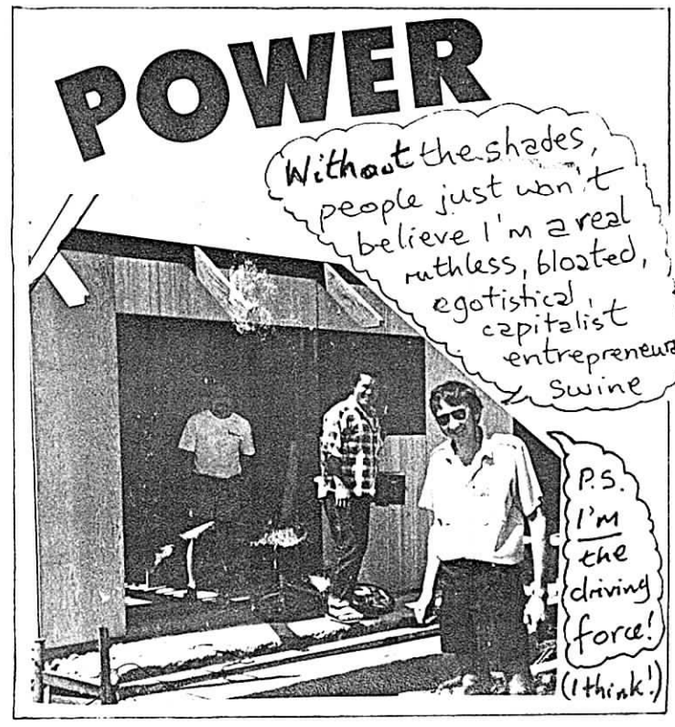
POWER
Without the shades, people just won't believe I'm a real ruthless, bloated, egotistical, capitalist entrepreneurial swine
P.S. I'm the driving force! (I think!)

from previous page

speaking landowner with contempt as a convenient owner of large empty acres of useful land and an inconvenient possessor of frustrating traditional land rights.

What seems to have been totally overlooked while governments were planning the future of his land and mysterious foreign forces were drawing up contracts and leases involving his land is that he has inalienable rights.

These are to decide for himself without pressure what he does with his land, to have documents relating to his land to be presented in his mother tongue, to have proper legal advice, to know precisely who is on his land and precisely what they propose doing on it and to it, and... to be as obstinate and bloody-minded as he chooses on HIS land.

What is also overlooked is that a 35 year lease on a landowner's land in Atiu drastically alters the Maori landowning peasant's whole economic status to that of a dispossessed proletarian dependent upon selling his labour.

Such leases thus tend to deny his very "Maori-ness" and certainly set the economy upon a path no longer charted from the Maori perspective.

As one landowner eloquently stated, "First their is happiness and security in having one's land. Only after that is absolutely secure comes any thought of exploitation."

It was in this frame of mind that Atiuan Minister Norman George returned to advise his people last week.

His performance in educating, gently assisting and explaining set him on a new level of leadership in landowners' eyes.

It was a landmark in Mr. George's brief political career and revealed new depths in his range of political skills.

He truly offered leadership at a time when it would have been far easier for him to opt out and let things which were not his direct concern slide to whatever conclusion they might have taken.

In his performance he also elevated the reuptation of the Crown Law Office as a people's friend.

The people needed a Maori, a Maori speaker, an Atiuan, an educated man, an experienced man and a diplomate to help them.

Only Norman George could have played the role.

"That's why we elected him," said a landowner committee member after the meeting.

Mr. Parataiinga, on the other hand, seems to need to extricate himself rapidly from the whole Vanilla Affair before it severely damages him politically. The fall-out could be considerable.

The MP's love of Atiu and its people is unquestionable. He could show it modern form, however, by removing himself from the vanilla affair and leaving the new committee to work with Mr. Lehartel if he wishes to continue.

Mr. Lehartel's lease is such that it caused one landowner to allege that it was a "rip-off".

Legal opinion has used the word "unusual" to describe at least one important clause.

The most startling aspect of the lease is the carefully emphasised right of M. Lehartel to declare any section of the 740 acres unsuitable for vanilla and thus be allowed to develop it or sub-let in virtually any way he pleases, In effect.

Monetary Board protection, notwithstanding, Pacific residents are well aware of the presence of large amounts of "Phoenix-Group" type money looking for island homes. Few can blame the layman for suggesting a future picture of an Atiu sublet to foreign interests doing God knows what with no control of a local nature.

Huge tracts of foreshore were due to go to M. Lehartel. Public access roads were to be closed. Fencing and prohibitions on Atiu land and customary rights were to appear.

It was not hard to detect that for Mr. George and the Atiu landowners the lease was an affront to their Atiuan soul.

We hear that similar gut reactions are being expressed on other islands which have no free press nor an experienced MP of Norman George's standing to protect them.

For this reason, we hope that the JOURNAL has assisted in a small way by our investigation of the Vanilla Affair to educate the people.

We thus make no apologies for the length of this report nor for the harshness of some judgments.

As for the future, we are left with no alternative but to thoroughly endorse Mr. George's standing as an Atiuan leader, although in no way endorsing the policies of "hands-off" free enterprise which the government he represents chooses to endorse.

It is unlikely that we have heard the end of the Vanilla Affair.

When zillions of noughts are involved, nothing usually ends quietly.

We hope that M. Lehartel may seek a humane and humble approach to future negotiations for the marketing of vanilla (just vanilla!) with those Atiuans who remain interested.

In whatever way we can, the JOURNAL will assist such moves as we have tried to in the past.

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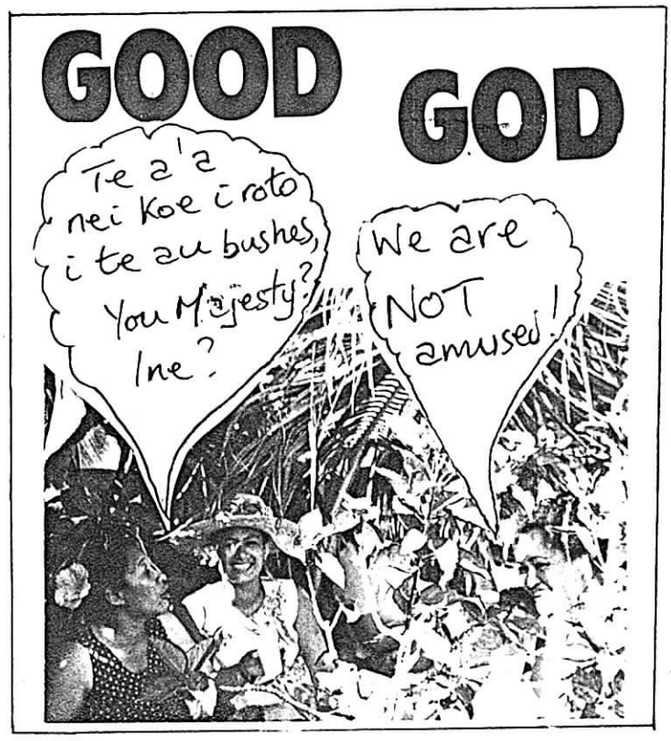

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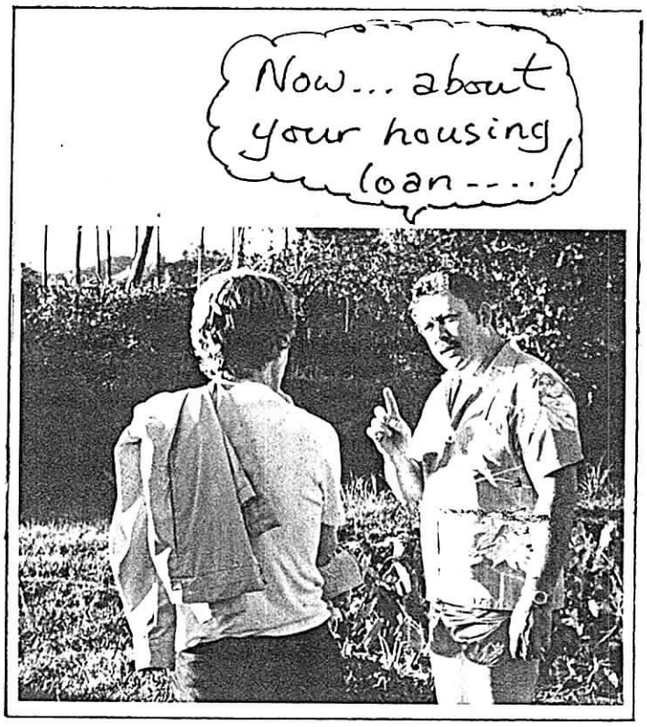
We suggest respectfully (and have already suggested to the Ariki Vaine involved) that Atiu restore some pride in its heritage and place its faith in the chairmanship of Ariki Vaine Mongomatane whose duty it is to exercise power of trust over her people's land.

At the height of the crisis, this paper's owners placed the future of their small piece of land in her trust. She did not let us down.

She further promised to raise the whole matter of land leases and incorporations before the next assembly of the House of Ariki AND to demand government action on Ariki resolutions.

And that, in CIs. socialist terms, is running things from "the Maori perspective"...and it's a good way to end the Vanilla Affair, for the moment (no doubt!)



ELECTION 89 ✓

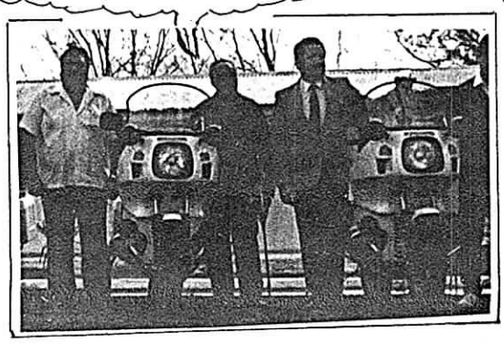
WHO'S GONNA WIN?

POLITICS

CIP LINE UP

Re-elected Atiu Island and Areora Branch General Secretary is Atiu College teacher John Akava (above with family)

Reportedly unsuccessful in his bid for nomination but still heavily influential among local CIP's is businessman and former doyen of Atiu Education Neville Pearson (above left with wife Tere), the CIP National Treasurer.



POLITICS

CIP LINE UP

In spite of some initial problems re-establishing the party structure, the two Atiu branches of the Cook Islands Party are now back in administrative action, reports Atiu CIP secretary John Akava.

The Party operates as a single overall island branch in Atiu with the two constituency committees serving as separate sub-branches, he said.

Members have acknowledged that there have been problems getting underway in this vital pre-election year.

They offer several reasons for this.

They admit that the ruling coalition (of which current members Norman George and ex-CIP Mariri Parataingа are members) have been successful to date in a policy of "disruption and confusion" in the minds of the electorate.

A Party supporter explained, "the Demos have no idea where Norman George stands or what he stands for and the CIP's thought they had elected their member until they found out he had deserted them and joined the Coalition.

Now he is like Norman. No one knows where he stands or what he stands for. Except himself."

The same supporter alleged that there exist only two groups of people on Atiu - those who have accepted Coalition jobs, money, trips and loans and those who have rejected such a way of running the country!

He concluded by claiming that the Coalition had but one platform. "To offer inducements to 51% of the elctorate in the form of jobs and hand-outs."

The CIP, he said, "are offering a proper programme of management and development which will mean justice and fair progress for all the people."

Prospective Areora candidate Mr. Neville Pearson told the JOURNAL that he had been informed that there existed on Atiu a strong climate of fear.

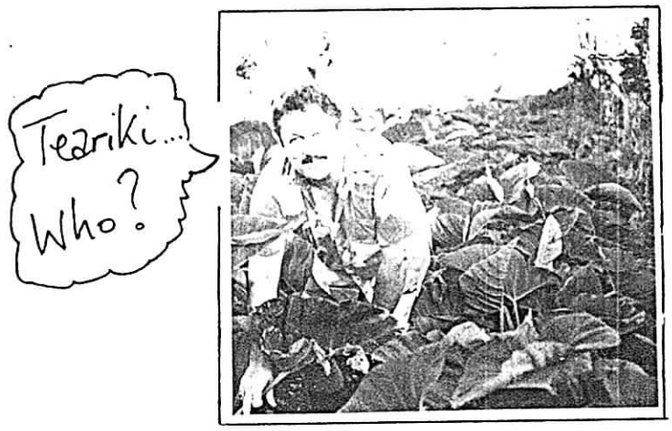
"People have been afraid to stand up in opposition to the two members for fear of recriminations and loss of jobs," he claimed.

This, he said, was another reason why the Party had experienced difficulties setting up their nominations.

A Mapumai CIP member referred to the position of Mr. Parataingа.

"We know he has been thrown out of the party for treachery in joining the Coalition under our banner. But some of our people just can't understand about coalitions and stuff like that."

He added, "that is one of our strengths. We look at Atiu and see a crazy situation. There is Norman and his people and no one knows what they are for. There is Mariri and he seems to be just for Mariri. The Demos are in a total mess since no knows what a Demo is. Then, there is us. Simple and clear. The Cook Islands Party. You know who we are, what we are and soon you will know precisely what policies we stand for. So you vote for us...or for the mess!"



Since last weekend when prospective candidates Neville Pearson and Tura Koronui came over to meet local executives, there has been a growing willingness to speak and stand up from Party members.

Says John Akava. "we are most definitely organised now. We have our three committees (one from each constituency and an overall island one) and we have our candidates."

He told the Journal that he and Atiu President would soon be in a position to make some positive, open statements on policy

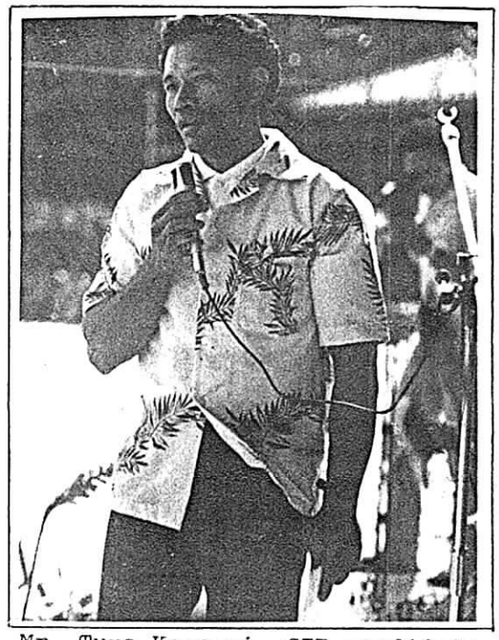
"I am very happy with the way things are going," he said.

Mr. Akava told the JOURNAL that the two Atiu candidates for the local seats were:

AREORA/TE NGATANGI/ NGATARUA...Tura Koronui.

TE ENUI/MAPUMAI.... ..Teariki Simiona.

Mr. Akava said the immediate task ahead of the committees was to continue strengthening their central organisation behind President/Chairman Moe Akai and the two candidates.



Mr. Tura Koronui, CIP candidate Areora/Te Ngtangi/Ngatiarua

And here's the best news

The Atiu College Upper Fifth 1987
Back Row: Tina Kura, Tania Moe Akai, Tangi Koronui, Vaineara Pakari, Nga Tanga, Tokorua Parua, Ngatokorua Iona, Miss Joy Duplessis; Front Row: Mary Kautai, Helen Mokoroa, Jean Mauri, Paulina Mateariki, Mangorei Mataio, Joy Vatsyayann, Aukino Viriaere, Nga Poti, Patiare Vainerere, Eileen George, Arthur Boaza, Patia Kapao, Nana Teamoke.

For an island frequently dismissed these days as an idle community living on Government handouts, it was a devastating answer by Atiu's youth!

Topping the whole of the country in the annual New Zealand School Certificate results, Atiu College's 1987 Upper Fifth class proved conclusively that neither Atiuan youth nor Cook Islands youth are lacking in academic talent or the ability to work hard.

The class accepted a year of 14 hour days five times a week, no holidays and a demanding academic programme.

12 out of the 19 candidates gained 6th Form Entry Scholarship standard, according to Department of Education statistics.

This 63% success rate far out did any other College ...by over 20%!

Joining the students in celebration of a hard and well earned success last week was Form Teacher Joy Du Plessis (also the JOURNAL resident photographer) from Vermont USA.

Miss DuPlessis was the class's Science and Biology teacher and led a team which included Mr. Nga Manu (Maori), Ms. Margrit Kriegs of Gisborne, NZ. (Geography and Mathematics) and Mr. D. Lewis (Principal..English and History).

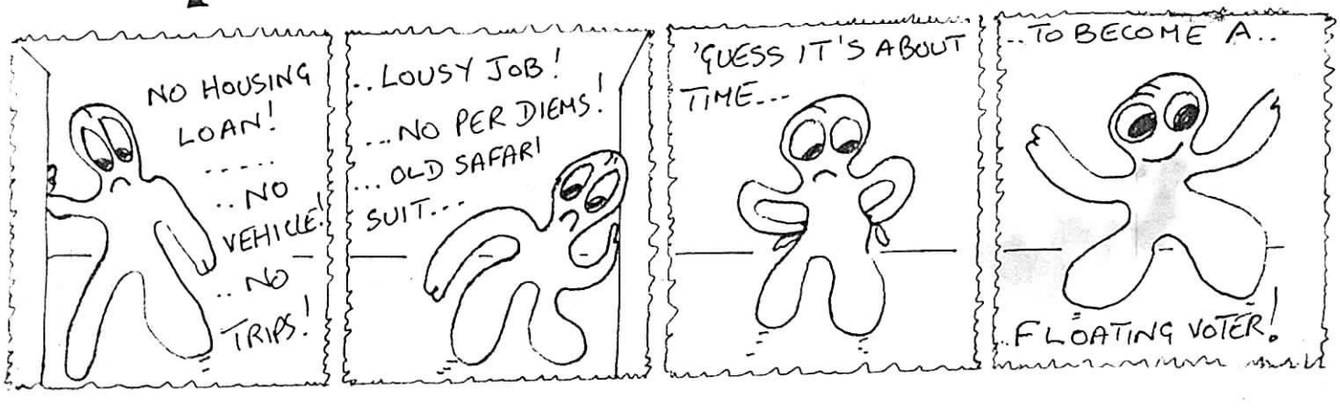
Highest single performance was the A1 in English by JOURNAL writer, Nga Tanga whilst a remarkable five A2's were registered by 12 year old Joy Vatsyayann, daughter of JOURNAL medical correspondent and UNV Doctor Surresh Vatsyayann.

Celebration functions were held in honour of the students by CAO Moetaua Boaza, by the parents and staff and by Atiu MP and Minister of Foreign Affairs Norman George.

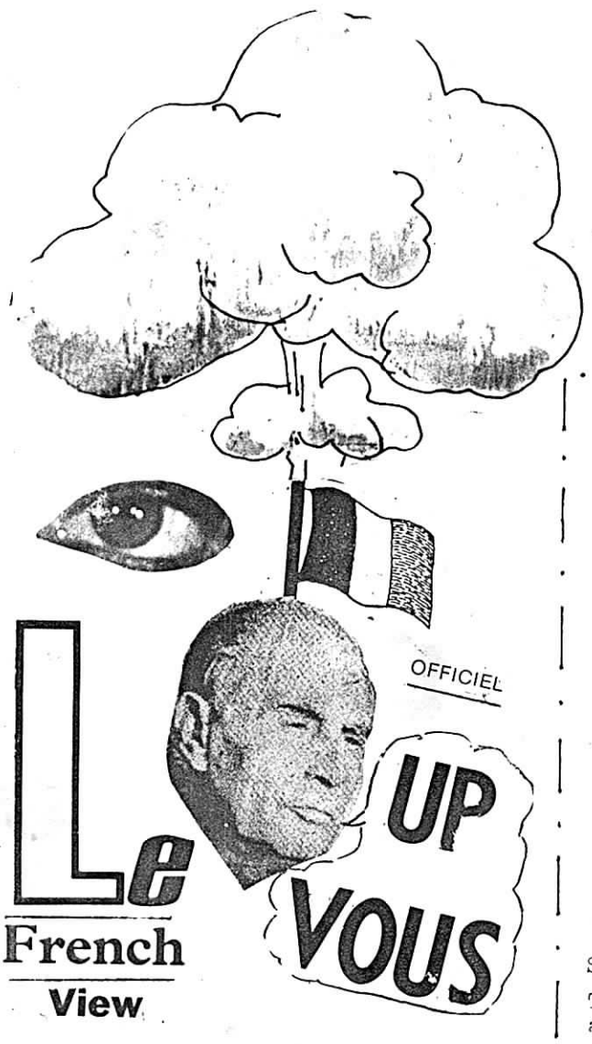
the quorums

an everyday tale of political folk

tropo



LIVING



Le French View

Pas so bon jour, mes amis! Je wishes to express mon tres enormous desappointment avec mon former grand camarade, le now totally execrable General Normal de Gorge.

Il was un homee, je thought, dans whom je could have placed tres great hopes to be le next Gastric Floppe (RIP) of le Kagion.

Un homme, il was, avec whom je have passed beaucoup un jolly soiree gloating over le downfall of le ex-Seignuer DOM-TOM et ogling les incroyables knockers at les Folies.

Un homme, je pensed, qui had pressed le flesh avec son Holiness le Pap son self.

Un homme, dans fact, dans whose trembling mitt je had but recently placed le grand sweaty cheque de countless zillions of imperial frog francs.

Mais woe is je! Helas. Un cannot count sur no one these jours. Comment sont les mighty fallen dans la merde. Qui would ever have expected un act de such ghastly treacherie come il has done avec mon tres tres hush-hush agent from le land of les luscious Polynesian knockers (excusez-moi).

Je refers of course to le treatment dished out to mon tres respected mole Notre Homme Dans Atiu, le celebre Charlie le Startled! Je hears that mon abominable ex-ami le General Normal de Gorge have put un sanglant grand spanner dans les works dans le idiotique nom of les stuffed-up peasants. Il will learn. So beaucoup pour any chance il has of getting le grand contract pour le extension of les mighty frog megatons in his patch. Il will plus likely get un vite exocet up son derriere if il is not tres tres careful.

Yours tres livid,

Le Grand Frog.

ER

SCENE:

The Oval Room just after wheaties.

RR: Say..er...
NR: Nancy
RR: Not me. I've never been like that goldarnit.
NR: Like what, dear ?
RR: Er...like what's in the world's a-going on in tnese here primaries?
NR: Which here primaries, sweetest?
RR: These here Democratic primaries.
NR: You seem upset, dear ?
RR: Well, goldarnit... I mean to say..er.. this fella..er.. Geff..er
NR: Gephart, dear.
RR: Yeah, that's the fella.
NR: So?
RR: Well who's ever heard of a President with a crummy name like that.
NR: Like what, dear ?
RR: Like Geff...er.. how do you say it? Geff....
NR: Fart, dear.
RR: If you say so. Pass the jelly beans.

Letters

Nepal,
Tuesday.

Sir,

I still reckon your paper's crap.

Yrs etc.

Dalai Llama

*Still **!!*?**!-off ED.

Therean,

Teheran
Monday morning.

THERE IS A BOMB IN YOUR PENCIL SHARPENER DUE TO GO OFF IN FIVE SECONDS TIME.

Yours sincerely,

Hermione Yussuf
(Mrs.)

Teheran
Monday afternoon.

COULD YOU PLEASE SEND IT BACK SO WE CAN CHECK THE TIMER

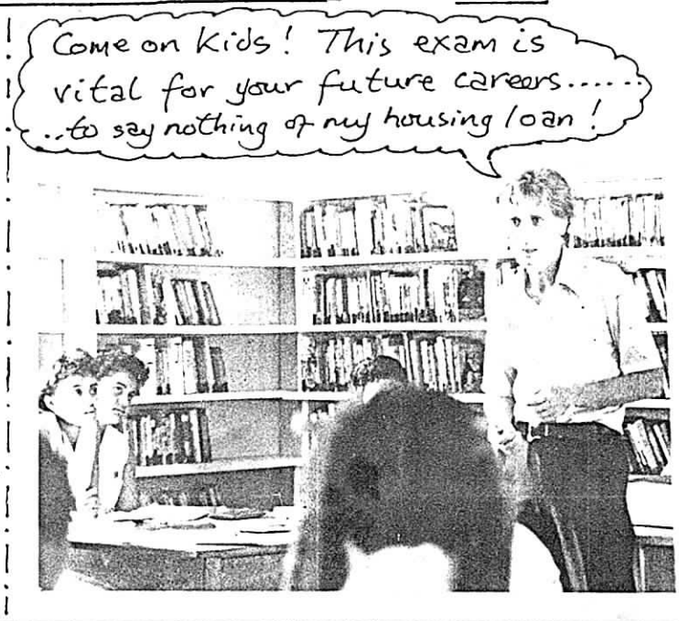
Yrs. H.Y.

THE JOURNAL & THE (Last) WORD

CHRISTIAN STOP PRESS

Our Jerusalem Correspondent reports that the veil of the temple was recently rent asunder. Ganga of wandering punk Pharissees are suspected of being involved.

FROM OUR ATIU WAR CORRESPONDENT



OLYM---

Reports have reached us that many national teams have refused to travel to the 1988 Seoul Olympics on South Korean Airlines.

The reason given is that the recent series of terrorist attacks on the Airline give grounds for concern about the safety of travelling sportsmen and women to the Games.

It is understood, however, that the Cook Islands Olympic team have accepted the generous offer by the S. Korean Governments of free seats to any team willing to travel on their national airline.

A 9/8 strong CIs. contingent is due to go to the Games including 802 retired cricketers.

"It's a good offer," noted an official.

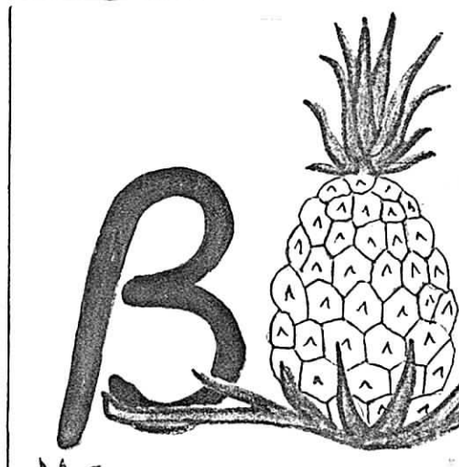
"We can now concentrate fund-raising on covering the in-flight beer bill," added an anonymous wicket-keeper.

-NEWS-

"I think Neville and Tura would make outstanding candidates. I see them CIP's having a difficult choice to make and I suggest they both be encouraged to stand."

-N. George.

BOY'S



Pineapple Juice

no sugar
no water
no preservative

100 % PURE

Product of Atiu, Cook Islands